



# English Language Listening Development and Instruction

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# Scenario



There are three English language learners (ELLs) in Ms. Santos's class of 15 native English speakers. One student is in the preproduction stage, and two are in the speech emergence stage of language acquisition. The theme for today's language arts class is "bugs," Ms. Santos reads a poem on bugs and asks students to circle words as they hear them. Instead of words, the English language learners are asked to circle pictures. The words are given

in minimal pairs—for instance, the students will hear the phrase "Bugs, bugs on a tree." On their paper, they are given the words tree v. three and are asked to circle what they heard. The ELLs are given a picture of a tree and a picture of the number 3. They are to circle the words they heard.



# English Language Listening Development



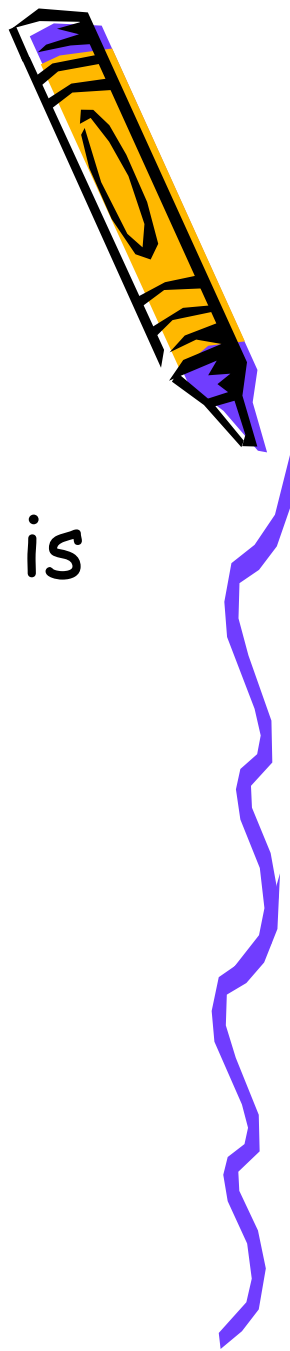
- "Most used and perhaps the most important of the language and learning arts"
  - Devine, 1982

Percentage of Communication Time



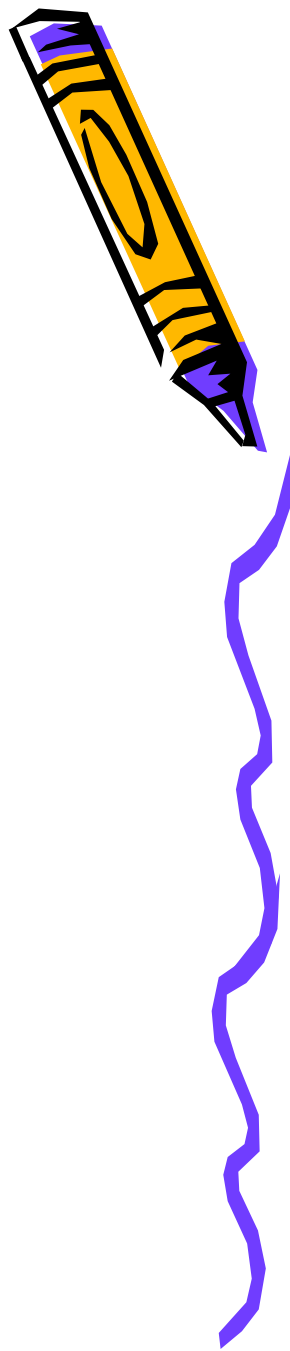
# The Listening Process

- Listening is a complex, multi-step process "by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind".
  - (Lundsteen, 1979)



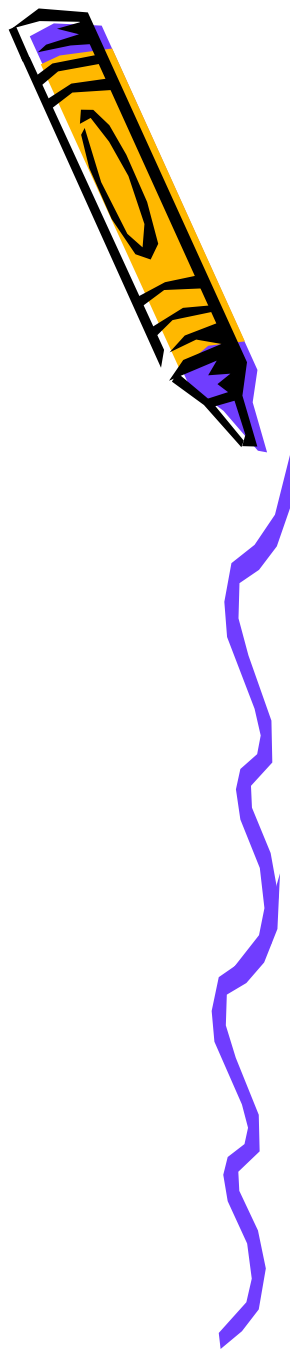
# The Listening Process

- Wolvin and Coakley's Three Steps
  - Receiving
  - Attending
  - Assigning meaning

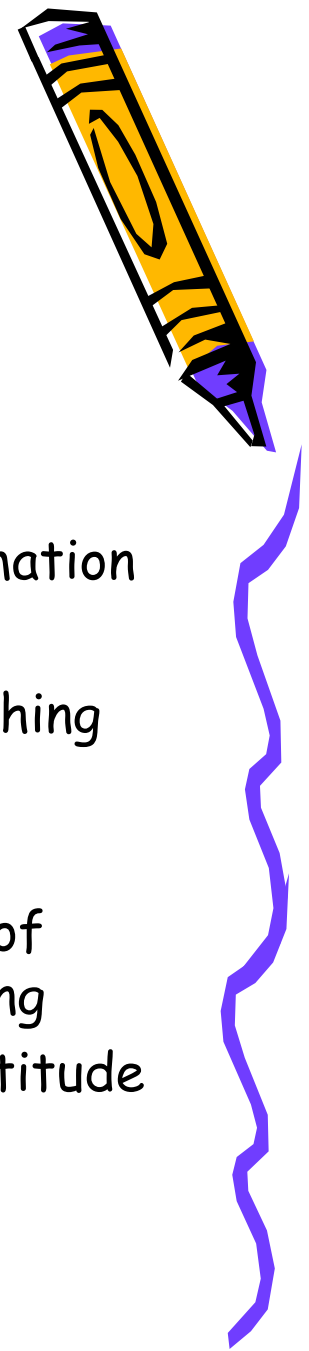


# Your Turn

- Create a picture icon to help you remember each of Wolvin and Coakley's Three Steps in the Listening Process.
  - Receiving
  - Attending
  - Assigning meaning



# Willis' Enabling Skills



- Predicting what people are going to talk about
- Guessing at unknown words or phrases without panic
- Using one's own knowledge of the subject to gain understanding
- Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information
- Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)
- Recognizing discourse markers (e.g., well; oh, another thing is; now; finally)
- Recognizing cohesive devices (e.g., such as and which)
- Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc., that give clues to meaning and social setting
- Understanding inferred information (e.g., speaker's attitude or intentions)



# Five Factors Influencing Listening Comprehension

1. Text characteristics (listening passage/text or visual supplements)
2. Interlocutor characteristics (speaker's persona; character)
3. Task characteristics (purpose and associated)
4. Listener characteristics (listener's personal response)
5. Process characteristics (listener's cognitive activities and the nature of interaction between speaker and listener)





# What Happens When We Listen?

- Determines a reason for listening
  - (e.g., getting directions)
- Takes the raw speech and deposits an image of it in the short-term memory
  - (remembering the right and left turns to the center)
- Attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, radio ad) and the function of the message (persuade, inform, request)
- Predicts information expected to be included in the message
- Recalls background information (schemata) to help interpret the message
- Assigns a meaning to the message
- Checks that the message has been understood
- Determines the information to be held in long-term memory
- Deletes the original form of the message that had been received into short-term memory
  - (Brown, 1994; Dunkel, 1986)



# Processing for Listening



## Top Down

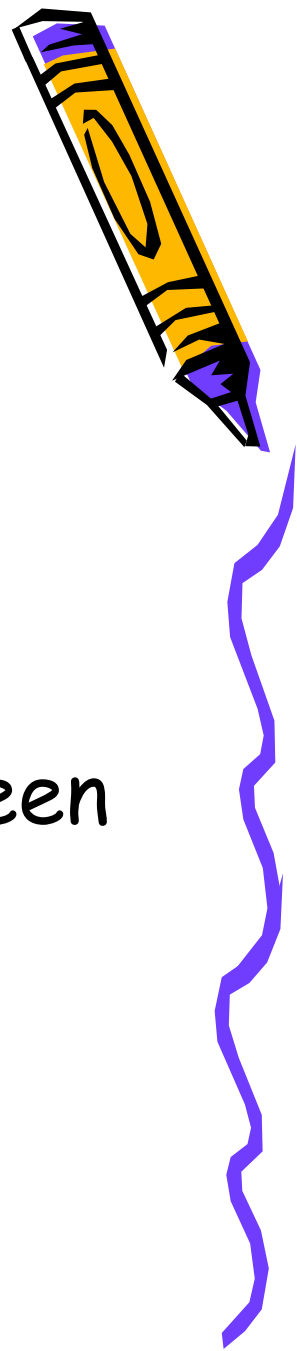
- Listeners understand the big picture of the message
  - Utilize schema or background knowledge in interpreting the message
  - Valuable to us advanced organizers, content visuals, and realia as aids to listening

## Bottom Up

- Listeners interpret the meaning of the message based on incoming data from sounds, to words, to grammatical relationships, to meaning
  - Stress, rhythm, and intonation
  - "Listener as tape recorder"
    - Takes in and stores messages sequentially one sound, one phrase, and one utterance at a time



# Why is Listening Difficult for ELLs?



- Lack of attention to speaker
- Continuous flow of speech in real time
- Distinguish and discriminate between sounds in L1 and L2
- Not being able to look back

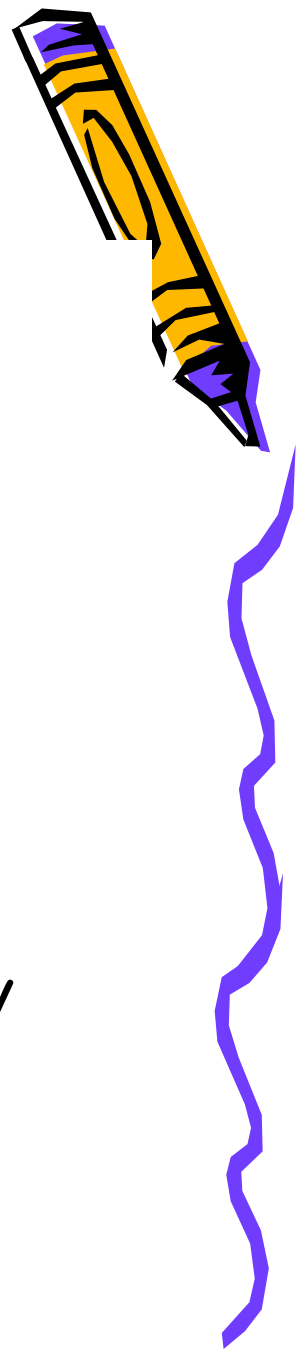


# Why is Listening Difficult for ELLs

- Difference in the sound system of English (syllable-timed vs. stress-timed)
  - Contractions (Who'd do that?)
  - Dropping sounds (Eat 'em.)
- When the change of sounds occurs (final sound of one word and beginning sound of following word combine to produce a new sound)
  - Did you do it?
  - Is your brother home?
- Sound contrasts that don't exist in other languages
  - Sheep and ship, bait and bet, fool and full

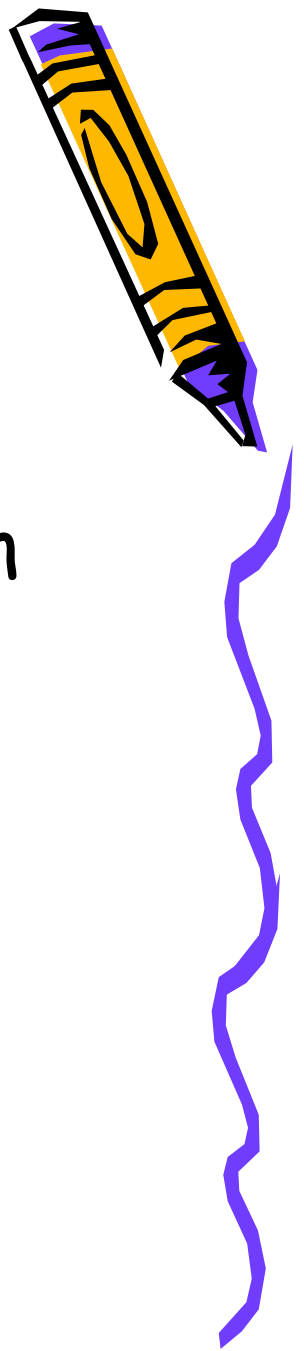
# Research on Listening

- Silent or preproduction periods are actually beneficial for students
  - Beginning Ss of Russian at the Defense Language Institute
  - Deliberately kept from oral response
    - Required to respond in writing
  - Merged with Ss in regular Russian program after 12 weeks
  - Experimental group performed significantly better in listening comprehension and outperformed control group on speaking, reading, and writing
    - (Rubin, 1996)

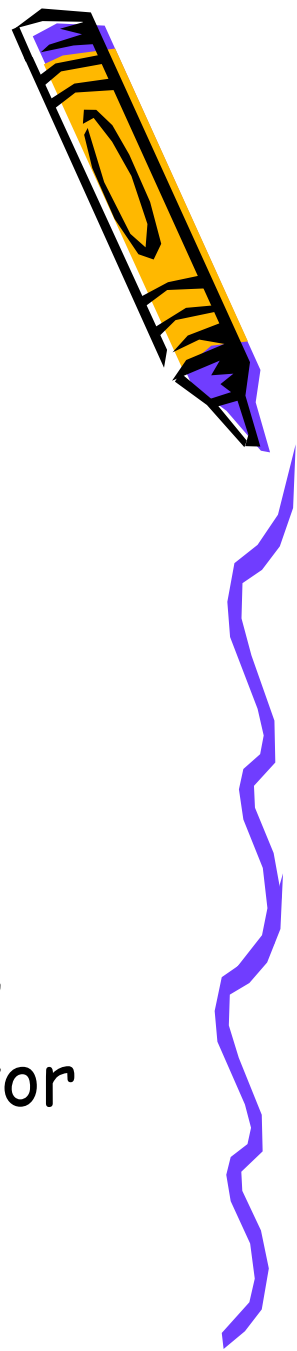


# Research on Listening

- Ss learn more when given the opportunity to store information in their memories when they are not expected to produce speech immediately.
  - Productive listening activities that foster vocabulary and build comprehension such as TPR



# Research on Listening



- Faster speech causes lower comprehension in L2
- Hesitations (repeats, false starts, filled pauses, and unfilled pauses) cause lower comprehension in L2
  - L2 get stuck in bottom-up processing whereas L1 discard hesitations in favor of top-down processing



# What is Good Listening?

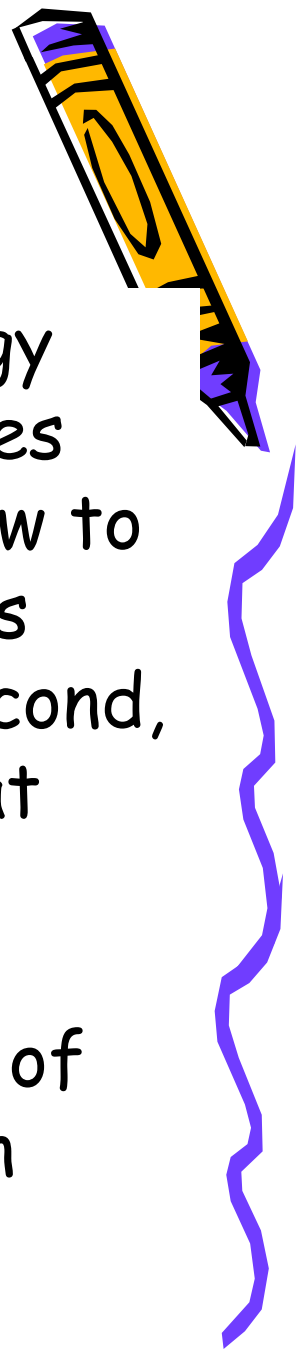


- Meaningful words and phrases derived from segmenting the stream of speech
- Recognition of word classes
- Use of one's own background knowledge to relate to the incoming message
- Utterances and parts of the aural text identified for their rhetorical and functional intent
- Identification of information focus and emotional attitudinal tone through rhythm, stress, and intonation
- Ability to extract gist from a longer aural text without having understood every word





# Strategy Based Approach to Listening



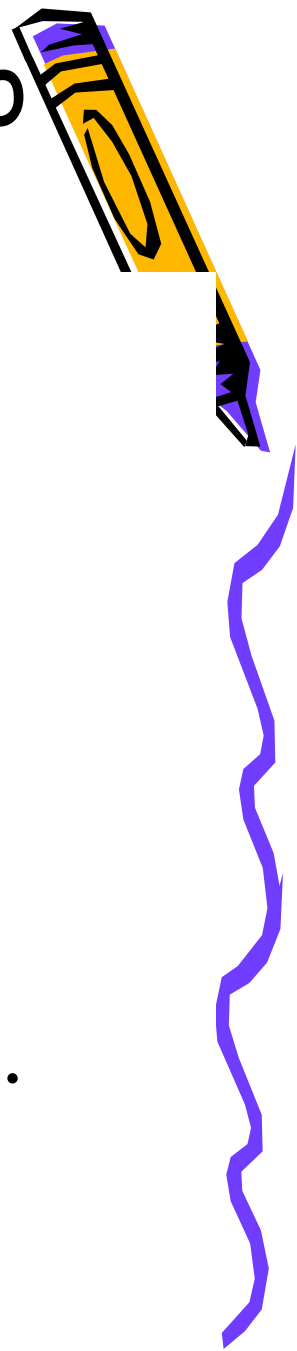
"A strategy-based approach is a methodology that is rooted in strategy instruction. It sees the objective as being to teach students how to listen. This is done, first, by making learners aware of how the language functions and second, by making them aware of the strategies that they use- i.e., developing 'metastrategic awareness.' Then, the task of the teacher becomes to instruct the learners in the use of additional strategies that will assist them in tackling the listening task."

• (Mendelson, 1995)



# Strategy Based Approach to Listening

1. Attend to awareness and consciousness-raising.
2. Use prelistening activities.
3. Focus on the listening.
4. Provide guided activities.
5. Practice with real data.
6. Use what has been comprehended.
7. Foster self-evaluation strategies.



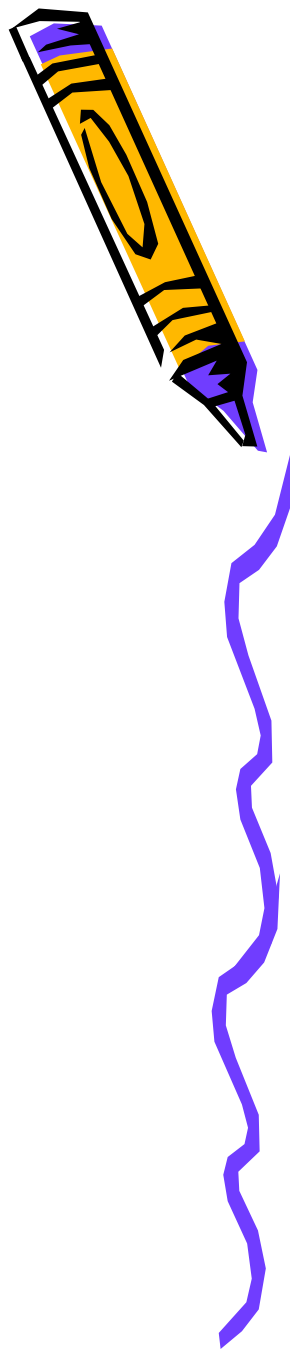
# Using Bottom-Up Skills

- Although Segalowitz and Segalowitz (1993) maintained that automatization of word recognition skills (i.e., fluent bottom-up processing) is critical for successful listening comprehension,
- Poelmans (2003), in comparing a bottom-up processing group to a top-down processing group in her listening comprehension study, had found no significant differences between the two groups.
- However, Osada (2001) found that an overemphasis on bottom-up processing contributes to a lack of success in listening.



# Other Ideas

- Using Advanced Organizers
- Using DVDs with Captions
- Using Metacognitive Strategies



# Tips on Selecting Listening Techniques and Activities



- Listening should be purposeful and interesting.
  - Tasks such as following instructions to classroom routines provide purposeful listening, and listening to taped stories is an interesting listening activity.
  - This activity uses the top-down processing in listening.



# Tips on Selecting Listening Techniques and Activities



- The development of listening strategies should be encouraged.
  - Playing video with the sound turned off will elicit students' prediction of the script of the video, and playing it with the sound turned on will confirm or modify students' predictions .



# Tips on Selecting Listening Techniques and Activities



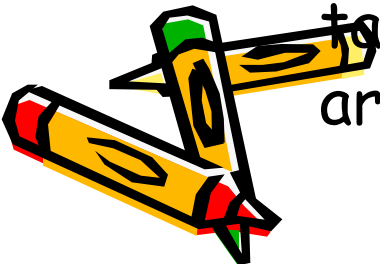
- Materials should be authentic.
  - Examples include children's programs such as *Magic School Bus*, *Sesame Street*, and *Blues Clues*.
  - Opportunities to develop both top-down and bottom-up processing skills should be offered.



# Tips on Selecting Listening Techniques and Activities

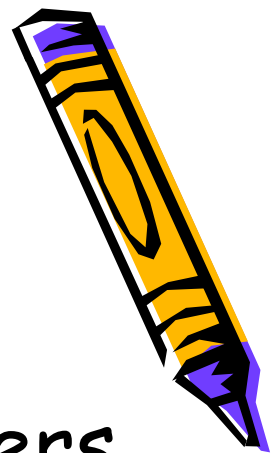


- Activities should teach, not test.
  - Students should not only provide a one-word answer to listening tasks, but they should also be able to provide main ideas and details of what they have heard.
  - The pre-listening activity can involve students in using language to predict.
  - Post-listening activities can help students assess their accuracy in their prediction. This task will help them develop listening skills that are beneficial beyond the classroom.





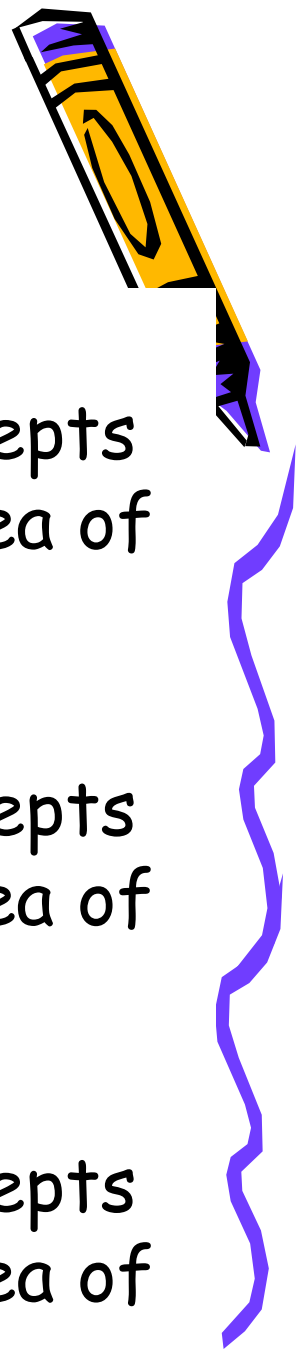
# TESOL Standards for Listening



- Standard 1: English language learners *communicate* for *social, intercultural, and instructional* purposes within the school setting.
- Standard 2: English language learners *communicate* information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of *language arts*.



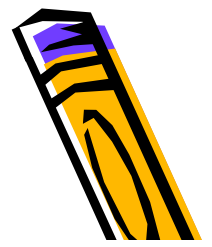
# TESOL Standards for Listening



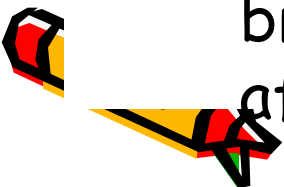
- Standard 3: English language learners *communicate* information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of *mathematics*.
- Standard 4: English language learners *communicate* information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of *science*.
- Standard 5: English language learners *communicate* information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of *social studies*.



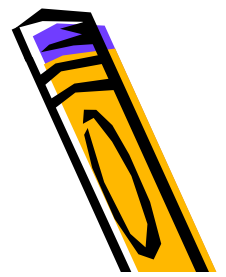
# Listening Lessons



- Prelistening
  - In an activity that involves a student listening to a telephone conversation, students are asked to predict the content of discussion between the speakers.
- Listening Task
  - In the actual listening task, students can fill out answers to specific questions while identifying the pictures of words they heard in the conversation.
- Postlistening
  - In the postlistening activity, students are asked to verbally recall the information they heard or write a brief summary of the information they gathered after listening to the taped conversation.



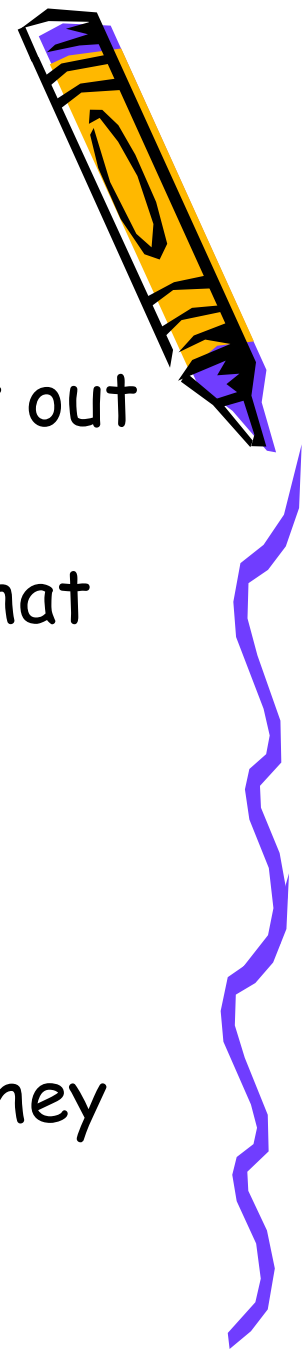
# Objectives for Listening Lessons for Multiple Levels of L2 Proficiency



- Taking action:
  - Listeners respond through TPR.
- Making choices:
  - Listeners select from alternatives such as pictures, objects, texts, or actions.
- Transferring:
  - Listeners transform the message they heard in the form of drawing pictures to fill in a chart.
- Answering:
  - Listeners answer questions about the text.
- Condensing:
  - Listeners take notes or make outlines of text heard.
- Extending:
  - Listeners go beyond the text by continuing the story or solving a problem.
- Modeling:
  - Listeners perform a similar task.
- Duplicating:
  - Listeners simply repeat or translate the message .
- Conversing:
  - Listeners are active participants in face-to-face conversations.



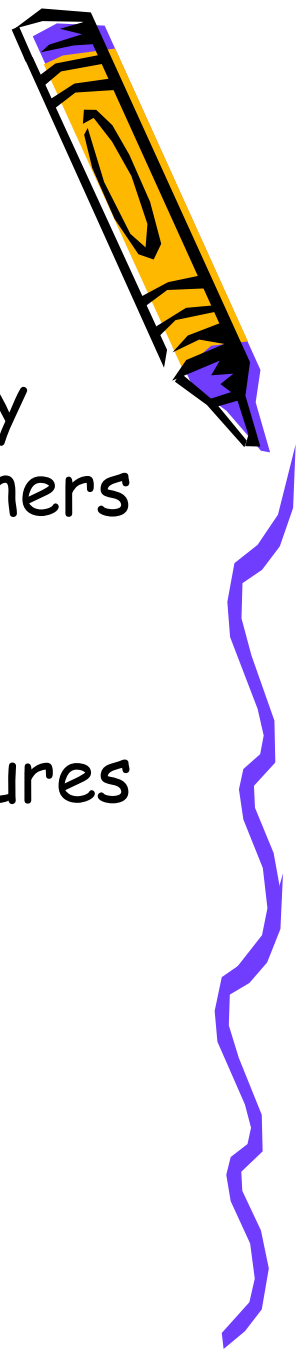
# L2 Proficiency and Tasks



- Level 1 (starting)
  - Students listen to commands and act out commands .
  - Students select/point to a picture that shows the word they hear.
- Level 2 (emerging)
  - Students listen to a dialogue and provide one- or two-word responses.  
Listeners use duplicating strategy; they repeat or translate the message .



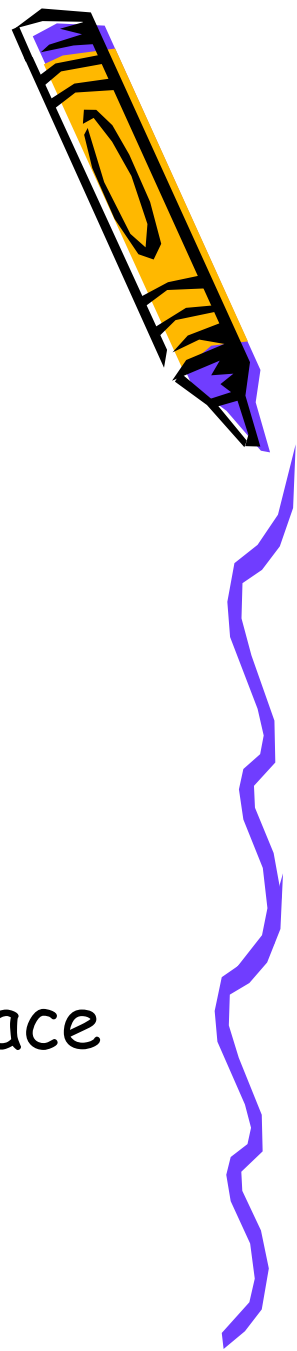
# L2 Proficiency and Tasks



- Level 3 (developing)
  - Students check off items-this usually involves a list of words that the learners listen to and check off as they hear them (e.g., picture bingo) .
  - Picture dictation-students draw pictures from verbal dictation .



# L2 Proficiency and Tasks

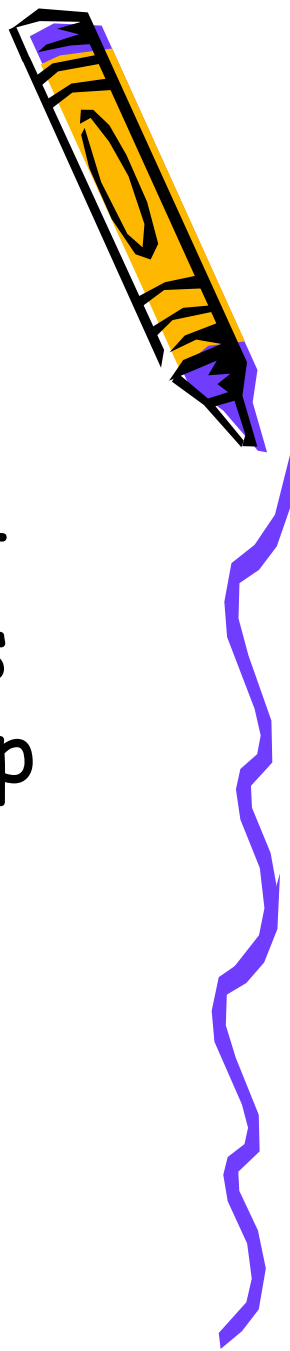


- Level 4 (expanding)
  - Students highlight key points of the lecture they listen to.
  - Students model a similar task (e.g., retelling a story read to them) .
- Level 5 (bridging)
  - Conversing-students listen and appropriately respond to a face-to-face conversation.



# Your Turn

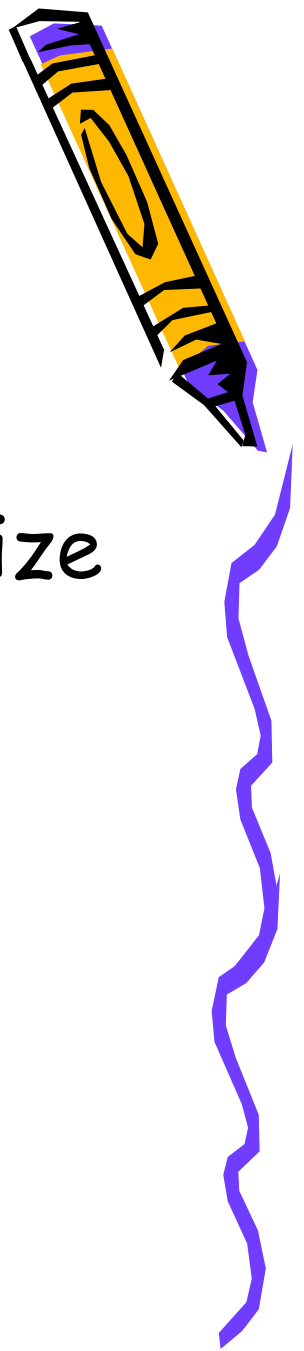
- Imagine you are teaching a new student from Mexico who does not know one word of English. What is the first thing you would do to help him with "listening" of the English language?





# Your Turn

- Using the sample lesson and activities at your table, categorize each as either:
  - Starting: Level 1
  - Emerging: Level 2
  - Developing: Level 3
  - Expanding: Level 4
  - Bridging: Level 5



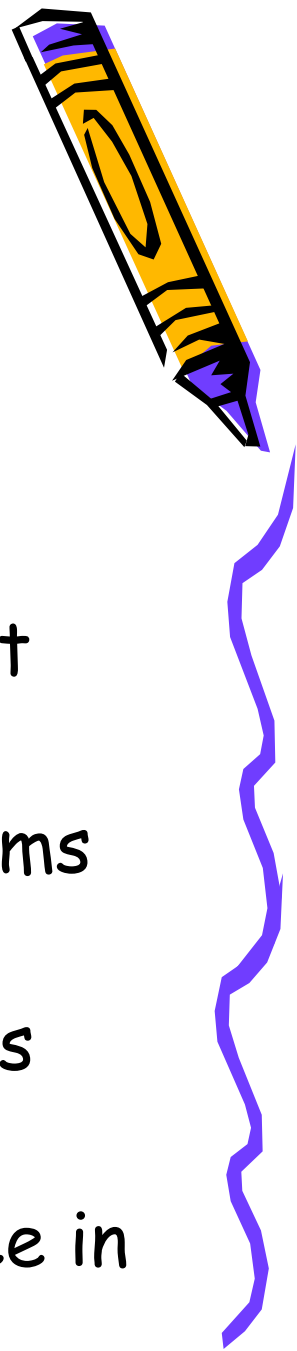
# Listening Comprehension Assessment



- Self-assessment ( 😊, :-|, ☹ )
  - I understand most of what I hear.
  - I understand some of what I hear.
  - I understand very little of what I hear.
- Blind drawing
  - Teachers describe a picture to Ss while they draw what they hear.



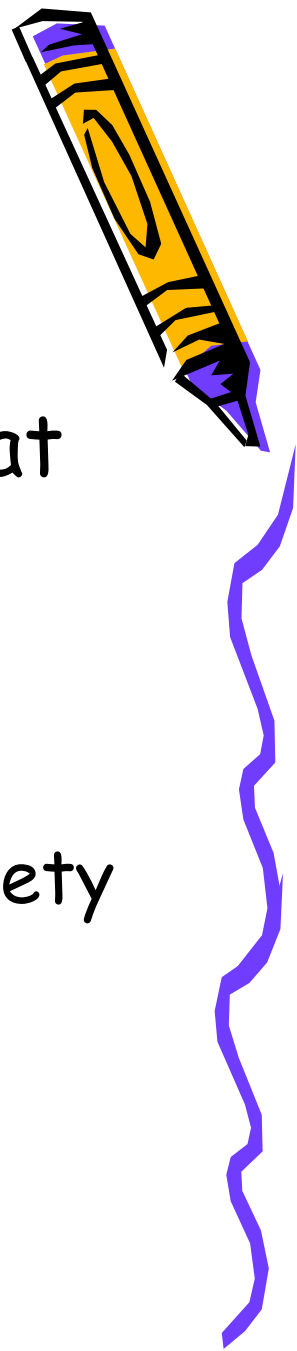
# Listening Comprehension Assessment



- What's this segment about?
  - T shows the first three minutes of a movie, commercial, or cartoon without any visuals, just the sound.
  - Ss are asked to list or define the items they heard.
  - T plays the segment again with visuals and sound.
- Ss compare answers to items they see in the segment.



# Listening Comprehension Assessment



- Douglas (1988) called for tests that are
  - Integrative and integrated
  - Conceptualized
  - Challenge learners to deal with a variety of learning tasks and conditions



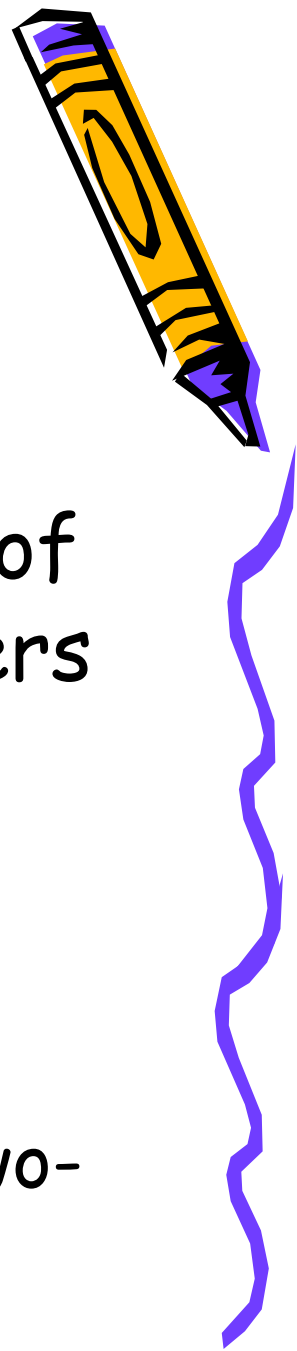
# Listening Comprehension Assessment



- Teachers can create checklists to assess specific listening skills.
  - For instance, students are assessed for their comprehension of
    - phoneme change in minimal pairs such as /pin/ and /bin/;
    - rising and falling intonation (He's gone out); or
    - stress on words that signal a change in meaning of the same statement (She scolded him).



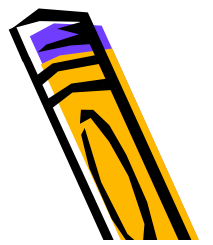
# Listening Comprehension Assessment



- Another form of listening comprehension is through the use of **anecdotal reports** in which teachers observe students' behaviors when they have a face-to-face conversation.
  - By observing students' facial expressions, gestures, and one- or two-word responses, teachers are able to assess their listening skills.



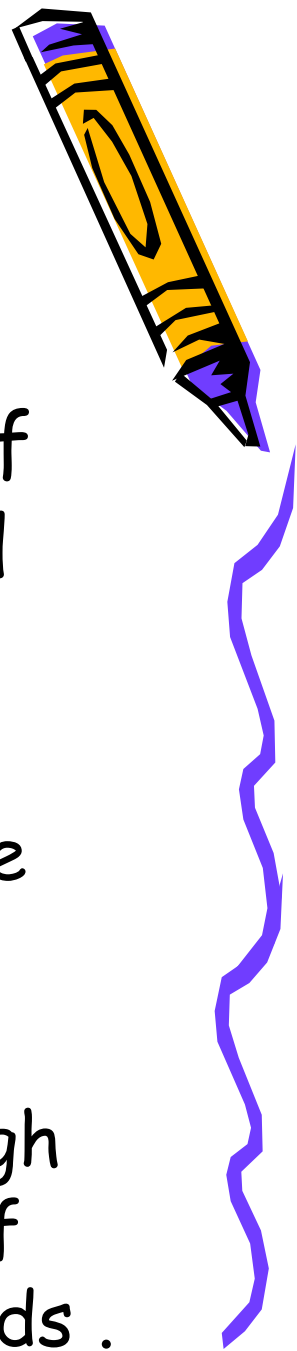
# Points to Remember



- Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying.
- An able listener is capable of understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary and meaning .
- Factors that influence a listener's listening skills are interest in topic, listener's background knowledge of topic, and the ability to use negotiation skills .



# Points to Remember

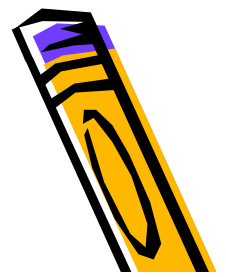


- Listening skills involve two types of cognitive processing: top-down and bottom-up.
  - Top-down processing refers to a listener's global understanding of the message, whereas
  - Bottom-up processing involves the interpretation of the message through analysis of the smaller components of the language, such as sounds and words .





# Points to Remember



- One of the many problems faced by English language learners is their lack of attention span.
  - Because they cannot understand the message, it is inevitable that their attention to the speaker is rather short
- Listening skills should be an integral part of all lessons in the class .
- Alternative assessments for listening comprehension should be used.



# Points to Remember

- Teachers should be aware that students' knowledge of phonology, syntax, morphology, and semantics in L2 are activated through listening to produce speech .

